

SCHOOLS WEEK

A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.

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FRIDAY, OCT 7, 2022 | EDITION 298

Page 18-20

Swiss Cottage:
The story of a
special special
school



How I'll get
unis to work
with schools



P22

School budgets:
Are they really
increasing?



P10-11

DfE eyes hundreds
of school sites for
housing



P8

The Malthouse Show



Conservative party conference special, pages 4 to 7

Crisis charity reports surge in teachers at risk

- Education Support sounds the alarm over rise in teachers reaching crisis point
- 'It's very hard to deal with kids in your classroom who aren't fed or washed'

JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE | Page 6

SCHOOLS WEEK

Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFENBERG@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
DEPUTY EDITOR

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



Tom Belger
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM_BELGER
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



Amy Walker
SENIOR REPORTER

@AMYWALKER
AMY.WALKER@SCHOOLSWEK.CO.UK



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

THE TEAM

Senior designer: Simon Kay | Sales Manager: Bridget Stockdale | Senior Sales Executive: Clare Halliday | Sales Executive Tony Hudson | Operations and Finance Manager: Victoria Boyle | Event Manager: Frances Ogefere Dell | Senior Administrator: Evie Hayes | Office Administrator: Zoe Tuffin | Office Administrator - Apprentice: Sanchez Nandi

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Cheap shots are not helping, Mr Secretary

Quite the message from Kit Malthouse this week. Speaking on Sunday at a reception at the Conservative Party's annual shindig, the education secretary praised his government's academy "revolution" for driving "a transformation in our schools".

"I think frankly, we don't talk about it enough. The numbers are extraordinary."

Fast forward two days and Malthouse, this time in front of the Conservative party faithful, said that, actually, the "vast franchise" (!!) of the education system needs "constant attention and constant pressure" to "drive it forward". In one final kick, he added there was "nothing quite as persistent as people hanging on to mediocrity". They do say a week is a long time in politics.

It encapsulates the tricky political situation Malthouse, but also his government, is in. The new team members need to sell themselves to the electorate as the solution, but they can't admit their party has spent 12 years failing to solve the problem.

While it's impossible to argue there isn't

room for schools to improve, the many crises that leaders are having to firefight inhibits it.

Putting more pressure on schools, rather than trying to solve those issues that are holding schools back – funding, recruitment, retention (to name a few) – is short-sighted.

What's more confusing is that the new schools minister, Jonathan Gullis, has shown a welcome commitment to listen and engage with the sector.

The former teacher's attendance at so many fringe events at this week's party conference, and his refusal to duck tough questions, was refreshing after so many years of ministers shunning such scrutiny.

But his boast of being "unashamedly interventionist", alongside his boss's claims of mediocrity", were tone deaf and needlessly provocative.

We agree with ASCL: Rather than taking cheap shots at the profession, ministers should be moving heaven and earth to create an environment for schools to flourish.

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'No mucking about': Malthouse promises 'constant pressure' on schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers plan to ramp up their powers to tear up funding agreements and move schools into larger trusts after the education secretary vowed to be "much more assertive about intervention and standards".

Schools Week understands the strategy has been dubbed by some officials as "Operation Plymouth" because it will draw on partnership working and interventions in the south west to improve academy trusts elsewhere.

Speaking at the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham this week, Kit Malthouse said the "vast franchise" of England's education system needed "constant attention and constant pressure from us as demanding friends to drive it forward".

He warned there was "nothing quite as persistent as people hanging on to mediocrity". "Appalled" headteachers have accused the education secretary of "taking cheap shots at a profession already on its knees".

Pledge to go faster on intervention

But government sources said ministers wanted to emulate schemes such as SW100, a collaboration between nine academy trusts aimed at developing the next generation of headteachers in Devon and Cornwall.

With the future of the landmark schools bill still uncertain, Jonathan Gullis, the schools minister, this week said he would look to use "existing" powers in the academy trust handbook.

It is believed this related to the government's power to issue termination notices and rebroker struggling academies into other trusts. The government has said it wants all schools at least in the process of moving into a MAT by 2030.

Gullis claimed that "extraordinary things" had been achieved in Plymouth by encouraging "some of the best MATs around the country" to support struggling schools in the area.

He pledged to be "unashamedly interventionist" in the period before the next election.

"The electorate may choose to sack me. I will



Kit Malthouse

eventually hopefully find a new job. I can go from job to job to job, but a child's life in school, you don't have a single day that could afford to be lost."

One thing ministers hope to emulate nationwide is the pace of intervention in the Plymouth schools.

For instance, in March 2019 a termination warning notice was issued to Plymouth School of Creative Arts, a free school sponsored by Plymouth College of Art, after it was rated 'inadequate'. By 2020, the school had closed and reopened as Millbay Academy, part of the Reach South academy trust.

'No time to muck about'

Earlier in the conference, Malthouse vowed to intervene "firmly" in underperforming schools to "push" them into academy trusts as he "reinvigorates" the schools' "revolution" backed by Michael Gove.

The academisation of "inadequate" schools slowed to just one conversion a month, official figures in January showed.

Only three schools launched as academies between October and December following forced conversion, Schools Week analysis shows. It marks the lowest monthly opening rate on record, while September's 11 conversions were the lowest since 2005.

Malthouse admitted the "movement that was

started has stalled" and has tasked staff with putting "some more momentum behind us".

"That means getting into those schools that are not performing hard, really intervening firmly and swiftly, turning them around, pushing them into multi-academy trusts, not being shy to amalgamate trusts, to expand the good ones, backing quality where we can, being honest with the sector about what is needed."

He added that ministers "don't have time to muck about".

'We need funding not cheap shots'

But school leaders this week condemned the approach.

In a joint letter to Malthouse, ASCL leader Geoff Barton and president Evelyn Forde said they were "appalled" by his claims of mediocrity, pointing to research that found schools with lower ratings "often face a combination of unusually challenging circumstances.

"These are not schools that are choosing to be 'mediocre'; they are schools battling against the odds to do the very best they can for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

"Rather than raising the stakes even higher, and taking cheap shots at a profession already on its knees, your department should be moving heaven and earth to provide schools and colleges with the funding they need to keep their doors open."

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Union sets pay ultimatum on strike action vote

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The country's largest education union is set to ballot its members on strike action after issuing an ultimatum to the education secretary to deliver a fully funded and inflation-busting pay rise.

The National Education Union (NEU) said it would enter a trade dispute with Kit Malthouse if he didn't meet its demands by next Friday for pay rises for teachers and support staff.

That commitment looks unlikely. Jonathan Gullis, the schools minister, told the Conservative Party conference this week that he was "not going to budge" on this year's pay offer – a 5 per cent rise for most teachers. The current consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate is 9.9 per cent.

The NEU, which has 450,000 members, ordered Malthouse to give schools the cash to increase staff pay "at a rate greater than the rate of inflation (retail price index, RPI) as at September 2022".

September RPI figures have not yet been published, but the measure hit 12.3 per cent in August.

The dispute would apply to teachers and support staff in academies and local authority maintained schools. A separate letter has been issued with a similar threat relating to sixth-form college staff.

Kevin Courtney, the union's joint general



secretary, said: "No one wants to take strike action, but education staff can no longer take year after year of below inflation pay increases that have had a major impact on the value of their pay since 2010."

"It is in the Government's hands, and we hope for a swift resolution."

The NASUWT union also warned it would have "no other alternative than to ballot to support industrial action" if a better deal was not put forward.

But Gullis urged teachers to give ministers time to agree a pay solution for next year, rather than go on strike.

He has signed off on boosting starting salaries for new teachers to £30,000 next year – a Conservative party manifesto commitment, albeit a year later than

promised.

But he said the school pay review body would talk to the sector to inform its wider pay proposals for next year.

Speaking at the NASUWT fringe event at the conference, Gullis asked teachers to "allow room to let those negotiations to happen for as long as humanly possible."

"You cannot afford to waste a day in a child's life. We just have to bear that in mind."

He was "not saying teachers don't have a right to take action. Let us get to a place where all unions feel they can put an offer to their membership and then we can go from there."

"I'm asking for this period of calm for trade union leaders who are doing their job" and let himself and other ministers "hear the different ideas and see where we can try and find a position that people are OK with."

"No one is ever going to be over the moon, but let's get to a place where we can all be ok with where we've got to."

However, Patrick Roach, the union's general secretary, said it was "totally disingenuous of ministers to claim they are delivering a pay award for teachers if they cannot guarantee that it will be delivered to teachers in reality."

"We have asked ministers to talk to us – to get around the table to find a resolution. But they have dithered, delayed and failed to make this their priority."

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Gullis asks DfE to look at ways to improve childcare support

The government is costing a proposal to offer teachers and social care workers more childcare support.

Jonathan Gullis, the schools minister, told an Education Policy Institute fringe event that improving teacher recruitment and retention was one of his top priorities.

But rather than just looking at pay, Gullis is exploring other incentives.

He has asked Department for Education officials to cost better childcare options for teachers. This includes expanding the free,

30-hours of funded childcare to cover children aged from 1 to 4.

The scheme currently applies to working parents whose children are aged 3 to 4. Earning restrictions affect households where one parent makes £100,000 a year after tax and other deductions.

"How much is that freeing up incentivising people to come into the profession?" Gullis said.

"We're running up the numbers to see how much that would be. And obviously, bearing

in mind the government's doing a lot to invest in growth, whether that money is there is a challenge that I'm going to have to overcome, but certainly [it's] an ambition I'd like to explore."

A quarter of teachers pay for childcare, a 2019 Teacher Tapp survey suggests. The average full-time nursery care cost £264 a week last year.

The Sun on Sunday also reported that the government is considering extending the school day to 4pm to help with childcare.

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'It's hard to deal with kids who aren't fed or washed'

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

Triple the number of school staff calling a crisis support helpline have been assessed a suicide risk as the cost-of-living crisis takes its toll on them and their pupils.

The wellbeing charity Education Support, which helped more than 100,000 sector workers last year, expects demand for help to outstrip its resources for the first time ever this winter.

In the past five months, nearly 500 education staff have been given financial support – more than in all of the 2021-22 financial year.

“Poor children are a particular source of distress for educators, it hits teachers in a way that little else does,” Sinéad Mc Brearty, the charity’s chief executive told the Conservative party conference in Birmingham on Monday:

“You can deal with bureaucracy, you can deal with dissatisfaction about pay rises. It’s very hard to deal with kids sitting in your classroom who aren’t fed or washed.”

Of the 3,876 callers to the charity’s employee assistance programme helpline in 2021, 285 (7.4 per cent) were deemed at risk of suicide. This compares with 276 of the 1,266 callers in the six months since April (21.8 per cent).

Schools pay to access confidential support and guidance from counsellors for their staff. About 1,200 schools used the service last year.

The charity also runs a free, 24/7 helpline open to anyone in the education workforce.

It received 9,532 calls last financial year. Of those, 741 people were clinically assessed as at risk of suicide – up 23 per cent on the year before.

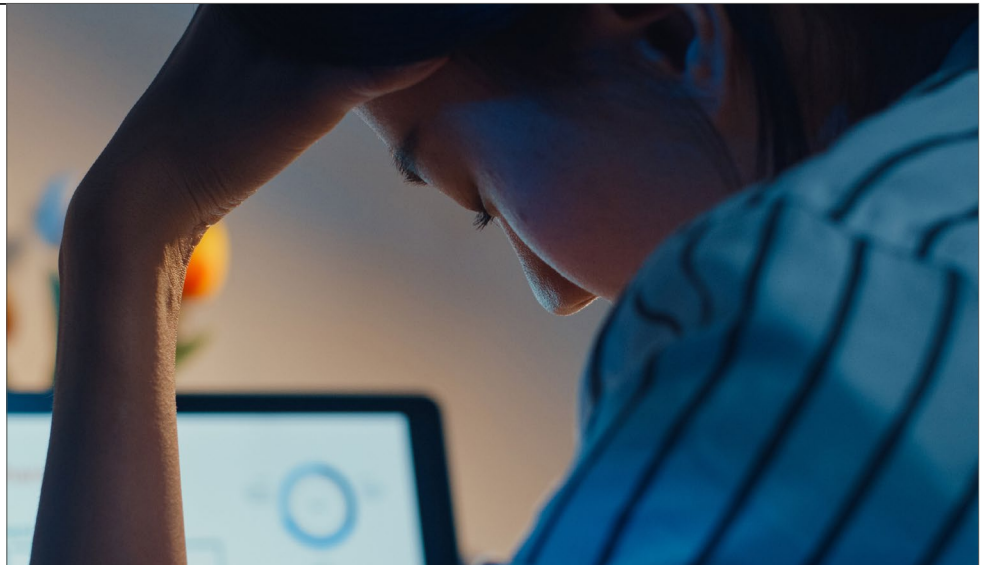
Mc Brearty said the situation would worsen as the “cost-of-living crisis deepens and we urge the government to act now to address the drivers of distress.

“We are experiencing a crisis in teaching that will have a huge impact on entire school communities, including the quality of children’s lives and education. It should be a matter of concern for politicians and parents alike.”

Speaking at the conference, Evelyn Forde, head of Copthall School in north London, said she recently had to call an ambulance for a member of staff who, during the school day,



Sinéad Mc Brearty



had said “I might take these pills”.

“When I graduated years ago, I wasn’t told about the social, emotional and mental health challenges that I would be facing in my classrooms on a day-to-day basis.”

Freedom of Information requests sent by the Lib Dems found that more than seven million teacher work days had been lost to stress and mental health in the past five years.

The figures, provided by 143 local authorities, also showed the number of days lost to mental health was up by 7 per cent in 2021-22 compared with the previous year.

A NASUWT survey of 11,857 members in January found more than 90 per cent felt the job had “adversely affected their mental health” in the past 12 months.

But two thirds said their school or college did not have a school-based counsellor who was accessible to staff and students.

Forde called for more specialist training in schools. Mc Brearty said the government needed to “acknowledge the scale of the problem and act”.

The charity says there has been a 57 per cent increase in grant applications from staff in financial distress since April.

“I don’t expect our charity to be able to meet the need and demand for crisis support this winter, for the first time,” Mc Brearty added.

The Teaching Staff Trust (TST), a hardship charity, received an “unprecedented” 231 applications for grants earlier this year as the cost-of-living squeeze bit – more than twice pre-pandemic levels.

It was so overwhelmed recently it had to temporarily stop taking applications.

Help with housing costs is normally the most popular request at Education Support. But essential expenses – including food – topped the list of grants issued since April.

Of those applying for help since April, 241 were teachers, 51 supply teachers and 201 teaching assistants.

The DfE currently offers a £1,200 grant to state-funded schools to train a senior mental health lead to implement a “whole school approach” to mental health and wellbeing.

Between October 2021 and March this year, 8,000 schools and colleges had claimed a grant. The DfE wants to reach all schools in England by 2025.

A DfE spokesperson has previously said it was “taking action to support teachers to stay in the profession and thrive.

“This includes increasing pay and launching the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, which commits to reducing unnecessary teacher workload, championing flexible working and improving access to wellbeing resources.”

You can get immediate, confidential emotional support from a qualified counsellor on Education Support’s free helpline: 08000 562 561

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Schools minister pledges pupil premium probe

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER



Jonathan Gullis

The new schools minister is “looking at” how schools use the pupil premium to make sure some schools are not spending it “in ways that the funding is not intended”.

Jonathan Gullis told a fringe event that he wanted to examine whether the £2.6 billion for disadvantaged pupils was “being used to really target and drive attainment, improve attendance, help with behaviour”.

But government sources this week denied this would be a formal review of the policy. Instead, the Department for Education will work with the Education Endowment Foundation to provide better guidance for how the money can best be spent.

Created under the coalition government, the premium is paid to schools for each pupil who has been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years.

Headteachers choose how to spend the grant, although government guidance points to evidence that shows it is most effective when used to support high-quality teaching and address “barriers to success”, such as attendance and behaviour.

Since last year, schools have had to

demonstrate “how their spending decisions are informed by research evidence”.

“I’m sure there are plenty of examples in schools where that is happening well, but I do worry ... that money is at times being used in other ways, in ways that the funding is not intended,” Gullis said.

“I want to make sure that that money, a significant amount of funding, is used in the appropriate way.”

Any formal review would likely create extreme anxiety in schools at a time when the Treasury is trying to find efficiency savings to fund tax cuts promised in the government’s mini budget.

It follows calls on the government to increase the premium after schools said they would have to raid their own coffers to pay for tutoring when government subsidies ended.

Tutoring is one of the interventions the government has recommended for pupil premium spending.

Ministers also said earlier this year they would “make it easier” for schools to use the £2.6 billion annual funding to “support literacy and numeracy skills where needed”.

However, the fund would retain its “core focus” on improving attainment for disadvantaged pupils, they said.

Gullis looks again at apprenticeships for teachers

The new schools minister wants an undergraduate teaching apprenticeship “as an option” to address teacher recruitment woes.

Jonathan Gullis’s comments set him apart from his predecessor, Nick Gibb, who long opposed an apprenticeship route for non-degree holders.

At present, the only teaching apprenticeship is a level 6 postgraduate qualification for applicants with a university degree.

Department for Education officials and a “trailblazer” group of sector leaders have been working on the feasibility of an undergraduate teaching apprenticeship for years.

Proponents say it would ease concerns that schools are struggling to spend their

apprenticeship levy funding.

Gibb’s opposition, as well as technical issues around how the apprenticeship would be assessed, have stood in the way of the proposal in the past.

But Gullis said he “certainly want[s] to see it as an option and would like to explore the opportunity, because recruitment and retention, recruitment in particular, is a challenge.

“We can’t just solely rely on the postgraduate routes, we have to have variety in the marketplace.”

However, he acknowledged some would “rightly be concerned about the level of depth of subject knowledge, particularly in key stage

4, key stage 5”.

“if we were going to do something like this, it’d be best to start it at the early years and primary sector.”

His comments are likely to raise questions about the relative need for more primary teachers.

Last year, the government recruited 136 per cent of the primary teachers it needed, compared to just 82 per cent of secondary.

But Gullis later said: “If can make it work at that level and show it works at getting interest up within areas where we don’t see recruitment happening as much as we should, then we can look at maybe the key stage 3 element.”

DfE eyes hundreds of school sites for housing

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education is to review hundreds of school sites in a bid to find land suitable to be sold for housing.

Documents seen by *Schools Week* show LocatEd, the department's company set up to buy and develop land for free schools, has "received a commission to review 316 sites" for so-called "underutilised" or "surplus" land, adding that "more are expected".

A director of the organisation revealed this week that schools in England have surplus land "the size of central London" that could be used for housing and community spaces. Other suggestions include using school roofs for solar power generation and car parks for electric vehicle charging.

Schools wanting to sell off land must follow certain rules. The landowner must get government approval to sell playing fields, and sales of unused land at academies may also need secretary of state sign-off.

But the prime minister has pledged a liberalisation of planning laws in so-called "investment zones", which could create greater demand for land suitable for housing.

Selling off surplus school land for housing is nothing new. But efforts were ramped up in 2019 and the instruction to review hundreds of sites represents a big escalation.

Approached by *Schools Week*, LocatEd said it was commissioned to "undertake a desktop exercise exploring opportunities for residential development" as part of the DfE's "routine work to explore the school estate and its potential to support wider uses".

"It is for schools and their landowners to decide whether they want to pursue such opportunities to unlock value from their estates."

The company would not say how many schools had so far been identified as having land suitable for housing, nor whether it would review more than the 316 first set out by the DfE.

Matt Robertson, its associate director of property, told a Westminster Education Forum event on Thursday that more than 22,000 schools sat on land of about 125,000 acres,



which was more than the amount of land advised in government "building bulletin" rules.

"Over the total school estate, the approximate amount that is surplus...is pretty much the size of central London," he said, adding that the land held "a great deal of potential".

It could generate income for schools, provide housing and "new community spaces and facilities".

Capital funding from any sale "can be used to address existing condition need, but it can also facilitate any essential works to ensure the longer-term performance of the school estate".

"Investing capital into these existing buildings, which are less efficient, can be a real operational gain for the school."

But selling off land for housing isn't the only way of making the estate more efficient, Robertson said.

He showed an example of a 1960s primary school, where a £30,000 investment in solar panels covering 10 per cent of its flat roof would result in a £6,000 annual reduction in its £21,000 energy costs.

A larger investment, covering the whole roof, would create surplus power, which could be provided to nearby housing or businesses through a private wire agreement.

But the over-generation "also leads to other opportunities with electric vehicle charging", Robertson said.

"The school car park is typically used during the day by teachers, by staff, by visitors. There



are other opportunities there to provide evening parking for electric vehicle charging."

He also pointed to LocatEd's "building up agenda" in urban areas, giving the example of St James Hatcham, a one-storied primary school in south London. It would "really benefit from around £500,000 being spent on it as a minimum", he said.

"So, in a project with multiple stakeholders in an inflationary world with no money, we asked the question: can we build a brand new, excellent education facility, improve outdoor facilities and do so without costing the taxpayer a single penny? And the answer is yes."

A proposal in the pre-planning stage would deliver 100 homes and a new school building.

The government's own "school resource management advisers" had also previously recommended academy trusts sell unused land.

But Robertson warned viability of such schemes was "really tough at the moment", with the cost of the school elements of the building alone having increased by 30 per cent since April.

"If we can end up with a school and mixed-use facility...it'll be a great news story. Bringing together lots of stakeholders...that's one of the agendas we're working on."

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Former ITT reformer joins Teach First board

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

Teach First has appointed one of the key architects of the government's controversial initial teacher training reforms to its board.

Will Bickford Smith, a former Teach First trainee and until last week senior schools policy adviser at the Department for Education, became a director at the education charity on October 1.

The charity was recently re-accredited to keep delivering ITT, and won a government contract to become an ITT market quality "associate". Tender documents suggest this could include closing providers, but the charity said this was not its role.

Bickford Smith will become a trustee alongside his new full-time job advising the vice-chancellor of the University of Exeter, which was also recently re-accredited to deliver ITT. He said he would use his schools experience to "push for universities to be true civic institutions".

Bickford Smith recently told *Schools Week* there was a "really good story to tell" about the government's progress reforming teacher training, in which he played an important role.

But forcing all ITT providers to re-apply has sparked a backlash, with some top-rated providers snubbed, exacerbating recruitment woes.

Bickford Smith led on overseeing the well-received teacher recruitment and retention strategy. He was previously an ambassador for Teach First, after training as a politics and citizenship teacher through its graduate programme.

He also founded the Conservative Teachers group in 2015 and was vice-chair of the Conservative Education Society until 2017.

Schools Week understands his appointment went through the government's business appointment process set up to ensure former civil servants and ministers do not "profit from their knowledge of and contacts within Whitehall, and to prevent any perception of wrongdoing".

Jonathan Simons, a former government adviser and now head of education at consultancy Public First, and Djamila Boothman, assistant head at Woodside High School in north London, have also joined the Teach First board.

Ofsted refuses to release training crib sheets

AMY WALKER
@AMYRWALKER

Ofsted has snubbed demands from school leaders and education unions to publish inspection training sheets.

Critics had argued the "aide-mémoires", provided to additional inspectors, could give schools with access to them an unfair advantage.

At least 12 of the subject-specific crib sheets have been leaked via social media since the weekend.

But after several days of silence, Ofsted confirmed in a statement yesterday that it would not be publishing guides for all schools to access.

"Inspectors assess schools using the education inspection framework and the school inspection handbook, and we would always encourage schools to read those," said the inspectorate.

"We do not publish inspector training materials as they are specifically designed to support inspection activity. And, without the context of our wider training programme, they are incomplete and do not work as guidance for schools."

The spokesperson claimed the "information they contain" was available in Ofsted's published research, videos, blogs and curriculum roadshow materials.

Both the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) wrote to Ofsted to demand their publication earlier this week.

Condensed Ofsted summaries 'useful' for schools

School leaders had said the guidance provided useful condensed summaries of what schools would be judged on.

Tom Middlehurst, a curriculum and inspection

specialist at ASCL, said Ofsted should publish the documents "in the interests of transparency and fairness".

Meanwhile, Steve Rollett, the deputy chief executive of the CST, said he "understood" concerns that the documents could be "misinterpreted" when used in isolation from inspector training sessions. "But I think, on balance, publishing them is the right thing to do."

Public research reports were "quite lengthy", but it was "plausible" school staff would find the summaries useful, he said.

"That they are now circulating beyond the inspection workforce means those not able to view them will feel the current situation is unfair."

Jonny Uttley, the chief executive of The Education Alliance academy trust, described the situation as "untenable".

"You've got schools and trusts where they have trained inspectors, and I know of multiple examples where [the aide-mémoires are] being used in those trusts internally. Now you have a group of people on Twitter [with access to them]."

He said that school leaders had a "finite" amount of time to read through published research reviews.

"If you're a small standalone primary, I can't imagine heads have anywhere near the time. For those schools I imagine it would be a godsend to have a one-page summary document for each area."

"It's reaching a point where it's untenable for Ofsted not to make the summary documents available to all schools."

In 2019, confidential documents used to train inspectors for curriculum "deep dives" were leaked to at least one school. It is understood an inspector working as a consultant was responsible.

The watchdog said the documents should not have been shared, but as they were still in development they would not give schools an unfair advantage.

INVESTIGATION: FUNDING

Are all schools really getting extra cash?

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

Ministers like to shout about increased budgets this year, promising all schools more cash per pupil. But what's the reality? Tom Belger investigates ...

The government is slashing per-pupil funding for more than 1,300 schools next year – and overall budgets for thousands more – despite rampant inflation, new analysis shows.

The findings undermine ministers' claims about every school getting extra cash.

Critics also accuse ministers of "levelling down", particularly in areas such as London which has been hit hard by falling rolls and funding reforms.

Ministers' funding claims challenged

Jonathan Gullis, the new school standards minister, recently said schools would receive £1.5 billion more in 2023-24.



Will Quince



Will Quince, his predecessor, said over the summer that a funding floor ensured "every school attracts at least 0.5 per cent more pupil-led funding per pupil".

But analysis of provisional school budget data by the National Education Union and *Schools Week* suggests a less rosy picture.

More than a third of primaries and a quarter of secondaries face per-pupil hikes of below 1 per cent next year under the schools part of the national funding formula.

This is despite inflation running at 9.9 per cent, and higher-than-expected energy and pay costs.

In reality the Department for Education plans to cut per-pupil budgets for some 1,266 primaries and 105 secondaries. They face average falls of 2.7 per cent.

Andrew Baisley, a National Education Union (NEU) analyst, said: "It gives the lie to the idea all schools are seeing funding rise. Funding's being levelled down to the lowest rates."

Ministers' comments were "selective", he said.

Quince referred to protecting "pupil-led funding", which normally makes up the majority of budgets (in per-pupil terms). However, so-called school-led funding, which accounts for 7 per cent of average budgets, is not.

School-led funding includes a flat per-school sum and top-ups for small, remote and private finance initiative schools, or exceptional costs.

Small primaries take the hit

The 1,371 schools losing out – spread across every region – are mainly small primaries,

TOM BELGER | @TOM_BELGER

Treasury's spending 'efficiencies' concern academy leaders

Hundreds of academy leaders have warned ministers of their "grave concerns" about the ability of schools to stay afloat if the government fails to provide extra cash.

Trust chiefs have written to the prime minister and education secretary, voicing alarm over plans to find "efficiencies" in government spending.

In a BBC interview this week, chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng denied a return to austerity, but said he was committed to budgets set at the 2021 spending review.

Chris Philp, the chief secretary to the Treasury, said last week he would write to departments asking them to find "efficiencies", following market turmoil as a result of unfunded tax cuts in the government's recent mini-budget.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), and other signatories told ministers that trusts were "concerned" by Philp's comments.

They also highlighted *Schools Week's*

story that the Treasury would claw back an estimated £300 million a year from the Department for Education that was allocated to cover the now axed National Insurance hikes.

"We write to you to seek clarification on the position and to state again our very grave concerns about the viability and sustainability of schools and trusts if there is no further investment in school funding."

More than 350 trust leaders signed the letter, representing about one in eight academy trusts.

The CST called for a meeting to discuss "solutions that would alleviate these significant challenges".

The letter noted the spending review was "based on much lower inflation levels".

The Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank recently highlighted an £18 billion shortfall between public services budgets promised at the spending review, and how much they are worth now as inflation has eroded their

value.

A total of £3.4 billion would be needed to maintain the settlement's value today for the DfE, according to its researchers.

Director Paul Johnson said not raising budgets to match inflation would mean a "real-terms cut in their generosity" and "squeeze public services". But he said it would "not be enough to plug the fiscal hole the chancellor has created for himself".

"Unless he also U-turns on some of his other, much larger tax announcements, he will have no option but to consider cuts to public spending."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We understand that schools ... are facing cost pressures due to international events driving up inflation and global energy prices."

All schools would benefit from the energy relief scheme giving "greater certainty over their budgets over the winter months". Core funding had risen by £4 billion this year.

INVESTIGATION: FUNDING

which are more reliant on this unprotected funding. Rolls and budgets have risen in most, but not enough to sustain per-pupil levels.

Yet 128 small schools face not only per-pupil, but also overall funding cuts. Their declines average 3.9 per cent (£87,000), almost double the average 2 per cent drop in the number of pupils. "It's concerning, and not easily explained," Baisley said.

The DfE said declines could reflect changing school circumstances such as moving from a split to a single site, or falling business rates requiring lower subsidies.

Meanwhile, Quince said the national funding formula reforms meant a 1.9 per cent hike in not only per-pupil, but also overall funding.

But such figures obscure who wins and loses. Some 6,163 schools, almost a third, will attract less overall funding next year, losing £297.3 million between them.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the NEU, said pupils faced "another punishing round of cuts".

Figures do not include extra pots such as high-needs funding, but some schools say costs exceed such budgets – and figures exclude some councils' deductions.

London schools feel family exodus

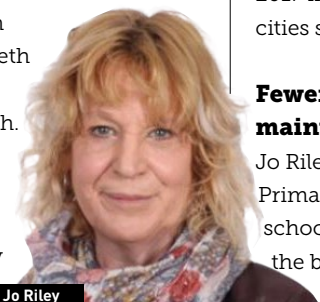
The overall funding cuts unsurprisingly seemed partly linked to pupil numbers, with average rolls in affected schools dropping 4.7 per cent this year.

Falling birth rates have reduced primary rolls since 2019, with a bulge in students moving into secondary schools.

London is particularly squeezed. It is the only region with falling total pupil numbers, losing 7,000 this year. Inner London faces the lowest total (0.1 per cent) and per-pupil (1.3 per cent) cash rises, while some regions will have total or per-pupil gains of 2.5 per cent or more.

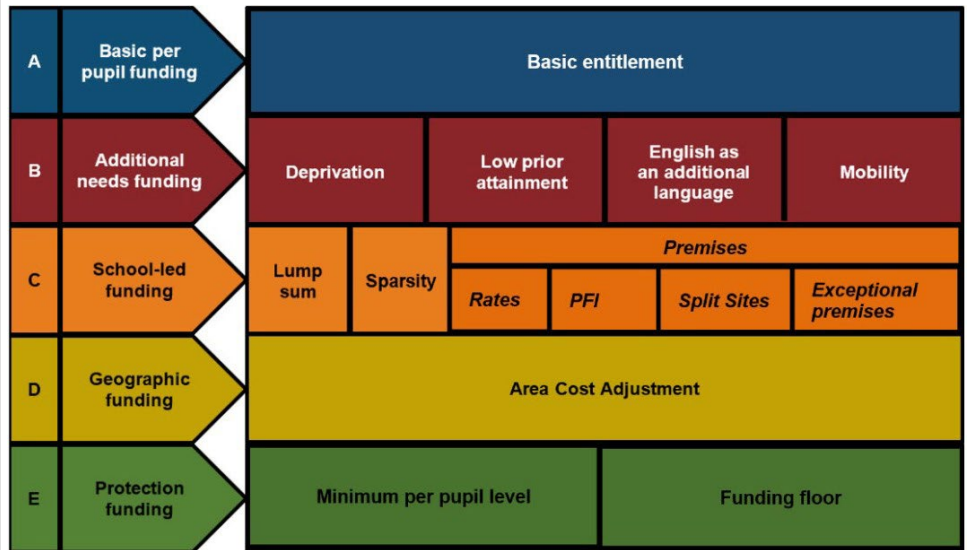
Nine councils' schools face net declines in overall funding – all in London. Hackney, Lambeth and Haringey will lose more than £1 million each.

Rolls in Hackney's primaries have dropped 13 per cent since 2016, with one in ten Haringey



Jo Riley

NFF FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL FUNDING IN 23-24



Source: Department for Education

reception places unfilled.

Both councils' education chiefs say affordable housing shortages are driving families outside London with many European families moving abroad since Brexit.

One London primary head said some families had made a "lifestyle choice" to leave London since Covid, seeking green space and benefiting from remote working.

Councils and trusts can partially redistribute cash to protect schools. But it means cuts elsewhere – and council freedom to deviate from national funding formula rules has been gradually curbed.

Hackney is losing its ability to be more generous overall; Haringey its ability to weight funding more towards pupils on free school meals.

The NFF, designed to equalise per-pupil funding nationwide with some areas such as London better funded than others, has also cut relative premiums each deprived pupil attracts.

The National Audit Office links this to real-terms declines in per-pupil funding since 2017 in deprived London boroughs, and cities such as Birmingham.

Fewer pupils, but school maintenance the same

Jo Riley, the head of Randal Cremer Primary School in Hackney, said London schools faced "constant juggling to balance the budget".

"Every year, when I look at predicted numbers my heart sinks at having to make yet another round of redundancies."

She added that although funding declined, her Victorian school cost "just as much to maintain as when we had more children".

The Lion Academy Trust has "sought to diversify" beyond London into "areas where the NFF was more favourable".

Chris Stark, its commercial lead, said pressures meant many London schools "simply have to be the local school of choice".

Haringey will consult next month on "reductions in school capacity".

Simon Pink, the finance director at the Elliot Foundation, predicts wider "rationalisation". It closed Lena Gardens, a west London primary, in 2019, blaming Brexit and welfare cuts for unviable pupil numbers.

With less funding for deprived areas, including outside London, the NFF has also "got away from what additional funding was designed to do".

Pink said the trust's schools had not seen "anything like" the average per-pupil hikes highlighted by government. Next year would be "painful".

A government spokesperson highlighted a 7 per cent per-pupil rise to core funding in 2022-23, and said the NFF "distributes this funding fairly. No school is receiving a per-pupil 'cut' to pupil-led funding."



Dr Mary Bousted

Oak legal challenge is back on

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Education publishers have accused the Department for Education of acting unlawfully in setting up Oak National Academy and have issued the education secretary with a fresh legal letter threatening judicial review.

The British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) believes the DfE flouted official guidance when it established the arms-length curriculum body (ALB).

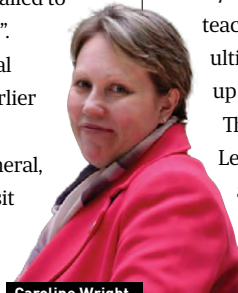
Government rules state new public bodies “should only be created if there is a clear and pressing requirement, a clear need for the state to provide the function or service through a public body, and no viable alternative – effectively establishing new public bodies as a last resort”.

In a letter before claim to Kit Malthouse, BESA also accused the government of not “following subsidy control rules” and “protection of property” laws under the European Convention of Human Rights.

The other claims are that the government did not take into account “the potential market impact” of the quango proposals and failed to “geo-block the ALB site to the UK only”.

It is the second letter warning of legal action sent by BESA. Similar action earlier this year was put on ice.

Caroline Wright, BESA’s director general, said she hoped Malthouse would revisit the “decisions taken by his ministerial predecessors and listen to the



Caroline Wright



concerns raised by educational publishers, MAT leaders, teaching unions and subject associations”.

She urged Malthouse to “withdraw the market-distorting” £43 million subsidy to Oak and instead provide “vital public funding direct to school leaders”.

The department had the autonomy and choice to address the pressing challenges that individual schools faced during the cost-of-living crisis.

But a DfE spokesperson pushed back, saying it was “disappointing to see businesses operating in the education sector seeking to undermine plans”.

They said the plans “have been designed by teachers, are in demand from teachers, and ultimately are in the best interests of pupils up and down the country”.

The quango has been controversial. United Learning, England’s largest academy trust and an original Oak partner, pulled more than 1,500 lessons last month, saying it did not support a “government-

approved curriculum”.

Unions are now sounding the alarm, too. Speaking at a fringe event at the Labour Party conference last week, Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the ASCL school leaders’ union, warned of “mission creep” that could “undermine” teachers’ autonomy.

He said Oak grew from a “principle of professional generosity at the beginning of the pandemic”, which had been a “really good move”. But it had “morphed into something else”.

“The subtext appears to be that we know what a good history lesson looks like, or what a good English lesson looks like. And as we’ve said, teaching and learning really doesn’t work like that. This is an example I think, of mission creep.”

Matt Hood, Oak’s interim chief executive, has vowed to rebuke ministers if they tried to interfere with the quango’s work.

However, documents explaining how the body is set up show just how much power the secretary of state has.

Ministers’ approval is needed to appoint the chief executive, they can appoint up to five directors, and their sign-off is needed on spend above certain thresholds.

An Oak spokesperson said it wanted to see a “thriving commercial market” and for schools to “always be free to choose what is right for them”.

A DfE spokesperson added Oak enabled teachers to access optional, free and adaptable curriculum resources and lesson plans. “This helps cut down on workload and gives teachers materials that can provide the best possible support to pupils”.

‘We’re pro-market’, Oak director claims

Oak National Academy has insisted it is “pro-market” after accusations its plans could “irrevocably damage” the country’s curriculum publishing capability.

Jonathan Dando, Oak’s school support director, said it was “actively trying to listen and put in place measures to be pro-market” but it needed to “listen to the voices of teachers in this too”.

The measures include proposing to “host and signpost” a wide range of other providers’ curricula and to make sure that

the academy would always be “entirely optional”.

Dando said other providers could use, edit and adapt Oak content within their own products, albeit with some limitations – although a decision has yet to be taken.

But Caroline Wright, director general at the British Educational Suppliers Association, claimed members had provided “overwhelming evidence that the Oak proposals will irrevocably damage the UK’s curriculum publishing capability”.

An Oak spokesperson said only 0.3 per cent of teachers use the platform exclusively, adding: “We’ve held positive talks with trade bodies about ways we can support the sector, including our proposal to host and signpost offers from a range of providers.”

The Department for Education said it valued the importance of a competitive commercial market “so it will always be teachers who choose whether or not to use Oak’s or any other provider’s materials”.

Spin-off trusts can solve rural school dilemma, say LAs

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

Local authorities hoping to form spin-off academy trusts say they can boost conversion rates, standards and financial viability – especially among small, rural schools.

Council plans seen by *Schools Week* will boost ministers' hopes for "orphan" schools. But one expert warned councils might still lack capacity to turn some around.

This year's schools white paper included piloting local authority-established trusts, breaking from the initial academy vision of schools outside council control.

The 29 councils – one in five – that applied are currently awaiting Department for Education approval, according to two applicants.

Schools Week asked several councils that had publicly expressed interest in forming trusts, and the Department for Education, for more details.

Kent and South Gloucestershire provided their visions, with both giving an early glimpse into how the new model could work.

MATs could solve primary gap

Kent said it might help some existing "natural groupings of schools working together...[in]" to form their own trusts.

South Gloucestershire similarly said its existing "hub and cluster" maintained model provided "foundations...for a strong MAT".

Both hope their trusts can launch next year – and help to fix policy challenges familiar nationwide.

They highlighted low primary academisation rates in particular. South Gloucestershire noted a primary MAT "gap", and Kent the "low penetration of national MATs".

South Gloucestershire's trust would prioritise "the sustainability of our rural and small schools alongside those in our priority neighbourhoods".

Kent wants to "ensure all our communities enjoy access to high-quality school provision, regardless of how rural or deprived these communities might be".

It highlighted difficulties finding sponsors to tackle "school-improvement challenges in the coastal towns".



Critics have long claimed the competitive MAT model encourages "cherry-picking", leaving "orphan" schools.

Sam Freedman, a former DfE adviser, said in a February report that unwanted small, rural primaries were a "structural" issue that needed regulator-launched "backstop" trusts.

The white paper in March even admitted trusts were not "adequately incentivised" to target need.

The councils' proposals may therefore hearten the new education secretary, Kit Malthouse, who has pledged to "reinvigorate" the academy "revolution".

The DfE confirmed LA-established trusts would not be eligible for more start-up funding than other trusts, however – despite it handing extra cash to diocesan MATs last year.

Tom Richmond, the founder of the EDSK think tank, said it was "debatable" whether council trusts would have enough improvement capacity and expertise after "drastic funding cuts".

But achieving the all-MAT vision by 2030 was "hard to see" without them.

'Scale back once MATs thriving'

Councils' varied contexts will also likely mean "many different models".

Kent's application suggests multiple trusts could serve different purposes, from improving challenging schools to deepening existing town-based partnerships. "The diversity of our

schools creates opportunities for a wide range of MAT configurations."

Meanwhile, South Gloucestershire said its cross-phase trust could reach up to 40 schools, although starting with eight to ten. Its model assumes 80 per cent of schools will be "financially and educationally secure" enough to support others.

It initially plans to top-slice up to 7 per cent of budgets, but eventually embrace grant pooling.

Members would likely include a council cabinet member and HR chief, plus diocesan and "suitable partner organisation" representatives. Trustees proposed include the trust chief executive and an experienced MAT leader from outside the county.

Kent said the make-up was "to be negotiated", and dependent on factors such as religious character. Council representation would be the minimum necessary and the county would eventually "scale back" involvement once its trusts were "thriving".

Other councils did not apply. A spokesperson for West Berkshire said this was partly "due to capacity issues", although Essex and Northamptonshire did not give a reason.

Cheshire East applied, but called the application window "short". It declined to share application documents with *Schools Week* as some boards did not have time to discuss them pre-application and "may feel the paperwork does not align with their thinking".

NEWS

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Attendance improves, but de Souza says it's still not good enough

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

Children's commissioner Rachel de Souza has warned the government that absence problems have not "gone away", despite attendance improving this term.

The latest official estimates put attendance rates nationally at 94.6 per cent in the week from September 12, based on data now submitted automatically by two thirds of schools.

The DfE has launched a range of attendance initiatives in the past year and called it a "positive start".

It marks an uptick on the 91.9 per cent rate of mid-September last year when Covid infection rates were several times higher.

Attendance has also improved significantly on the 86.9 per cent in July, shortly before the summer holidays and amid then-rising Covid rates.

But a newly published online dashboard shows significant regional variation, with attendance as low as 89.9 per cent in secondaries in Middlesbrough.

Like-for-like data is not available for mid-September attendance pre-Covid, but average autumn term attendance is published annually.

The latest 94.6 per cent is lower than the 95.1 per cent of autumn 2019, and every other autumn for which figures are available back to 2016.

De Souza told a fringe event at the Conservative party annual conference this week in Birmingham: "I think the civil servants are happy with 94 [per cent]. I'm not."

She suggested schools would normally "be looking at 98" at the start of term, which her office said was based on her own experience as a teacher and head. "The issue hasn't gone away."

The DfE's dashboard is designed to give schools,



councils and officials real-time data and comparison tools, and de Souza said it meant "the right actions can be taken".

But Robert Halfon, the Conservative chair of the education select committee, warned in an op-ed for *The House* magazine this week that recorded absences "represent only those children known to authorities".

The pair have welcomed planned registers of children not in school, but the schools bill it forms part of has been delayed. Halfon said it "cannot be implemented quickly enough", and urged "proactive action" on persistent absence, noting one council reported attendance staff having 3,000 cases each.

"The cohort of ghost pupils must be placed at the top of the new education secretary's in-tray."

Meanwhile Tony Bell, who leads the education arm of the union Prospect, said councils would be forced to "divert funding" to pay for new attendance duties introduced this term.

They include "rigorously" tracking data, and providing free support to all schools with communication, advice,

termly support meetings, multi-disciplinary support and legal intervention.

The Local Government Association said it supported the principles, but warned DfE analysis "does not adequately capture the additional workload" and costs.

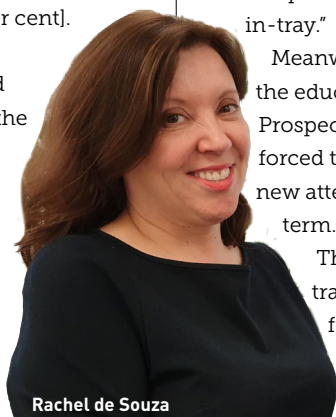
The government has predicted reforms will save councils a combined £274,743 a year, assuming they copy the approach of several authorities said to be meeting new standards already.

But it refused to name its favoured councils after a *Schools Week* freedom of information request, despite acknowledging it may "aid" others. It said it involved confidential and commercially sensitive information, and risked limiting future information-sharing.

Bell called it "disappointing" and "surprising", as the DfE said it wanted "to share good practice."

Responding to attendance figures, Kit Malthouse, the education secretary, said this week "every day counts", and the dashboard marked a "significant step" in tackling absence.

A government spokesperson also highlighted a one-to-one attendance pilot launched this term in Middlesbrough.



Rachel de Souza

NEWS IN BRIEF

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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School food pilot launches

A government pilot aimed at driving up school food standards has begun in 18 areas, with inspectors set to look at the nutritional value of meals.

The "levelling-up" white paper in February promised to "design and test a new approach" to check and support school compliance with national food standards.

The government's subsequent food strategy made a similar pledge as part of a wider "school food revolution".

Under the pilot, council food hygiene inspectors will also ask questions and make observations about "nutrition-focused" issues in schools.

While such observations will not contribute to hygiene inspection results or ratings, they may be shared with public health or food education teams.

Results will not be made public, but research from the pilot will inform decisions over "the role local authorities could play in assuring



compliance with the school food standards".

The scheme, co-led by the Department for Education and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), will run until July.

Professor Susan Jebb, the chair of the FSA, has previously suggested the plans were an "important step to bring central and local government closer together", and ensuring "robust assurance".

A 2019 Food for Life study claimed at least 60 per cent of schools were not compliant with food standards. Its investigation found caterers highlighting rising costs, inadequate government funding and a lack of enforcement.

The authorities involved are:

- Blackpool Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Derbyshire County Council
- Derbyshire Dales District Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Oldham Council
- Herefordshire Council
- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Newham Council
- Chelmsford City Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

[Full story here](#)

Be prepared for another hot summer, warns DfE

Schools should prepare for "extreme heat" as part of emergency planning after this summer's scorching temperatures.

Leaders are advised to ensure their emergency plan is "generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents" under Department of Education (DfE) non-statutory guidance.

But a list of potential scenarios – which also includes bomb threats, fires and "significant" infectious disease incidents – was updated on Monday to include extreme heat as "severe weather". Other examples include flooding, storms or snow.

During the heatwave in mid-July this year, the Met Office issued an unprecedented red 'extreme heat' warning. Temperatures in the UK soared to a record breaking 40.3C.

In the emergency planning guidance, schools are advised to stay open "for as many children, pupils or students as possible" during "severe weather".

"However, it might be necessary

to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury," the document states. "You should do all you can to reopen as soon as possible."

During this summer's heatwave, the DfE advised against closures, but *Schools Week* analysis found that as many as 104 schools closed their doors on at least one day due to heat.

Other schools implemented makeshift measures including non-uniform days, keeping pupils inside at breaktime and finishing early in order to keep children cool.

While advising against closures in July, the DfE underlined the government's heatwave plan guidance for teachers and other professionals in education and early years settings.

It noted that children were at increased risk of side effects including dehydration and heatstroke and advised measures including encouraging pupils to wear "loose, light-coloured clothing".

Returning teachers promised more support

The government has ramped up efforts to lure former teachers back into classrooms after the low recruitment of trainees this year.

Returning teachers in any secondary subject will now be eligible to receive support from an adviser.

The support, offered through the government's Return to Teaching website, helps candidates with their applications and finding vacancies.

Previously, only former teachers of "priority" subjects gained access to an adviser. These included maths, physics, modern languages, chemistry and computing teachers.

The new help comes amid continuing recruitment issues, although the Department for Education made no reference to these in the update.

New government data published last week suggest it has missed its target for trainee secondary recruits by a third.

Physics fared worse, missing its target by 80 per cent. But several other subjects – including business studies, music, geography and English – look set to face shortfalls.

An analysis by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) showed a strong correlation between subjects with the largest falls in recruits and the biggest drop in bursaries.

The government's strategy to get former teachers back into the profession has faltered in recent years.

Last month, *Schools Week* revealed that in the past two years just 23 physics teachers eligible for support had returned.

[Full story here](#)

SPEED READ

Key stage 1 attainment plunges in first tests since Covid

Attainment at key stage 1 has dropped across the board in the first set of tests since 2019, with poorer pupils falling further behind their better-off peers.

Performance in the phonics screening check, one of the government's key measures of success at primary school, is now the lowest it has been since 2014.

Writing attainment in key stage 1 SATs dropped more than ten percentage points.

The findings will further fuel fears about the impact of Covid on the youngest pupils, whose entire time at school has been affected by the pandemic, and whether the government has done enough to combat it.

The pandemic forced the cancellation of primary tests in 2020 and 2021.

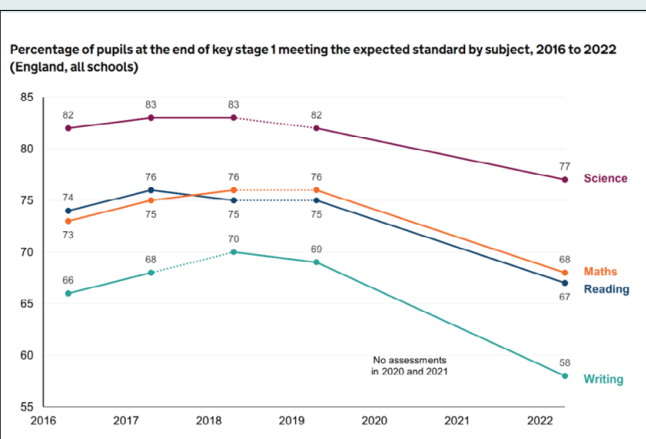
FIRST PHONICS DROP SINCE 2012

Department for Education data shows the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the year 1 phonics screening check fell from 82 per cent three years ago to 75 per cent this year. It is the first fall since the check was introduced in 2012.

The proportion of pupils meeting the standard by the end of year 2 also fell, from 91 to 87 per cent, although this figure also fell slightly in 2019.

Meanwhile, in key stage 1 SATs, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard dropped from 75 to 67 per cent in reading, 69 to 58 per cent in writing and 76 to 68 per cent in maths (see graph below).

It comes after key stage 2 results for year 6 pupils published earlier this year also showed a drop in attainment in most disciplines.



POORER PUPILS FALL FURTHER BEHIND

The proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in year 1 phonics checks fell from 84 to 80 per cent, whereas attainment among disadvantaged pupils dropped from 71 to 62 per cent.

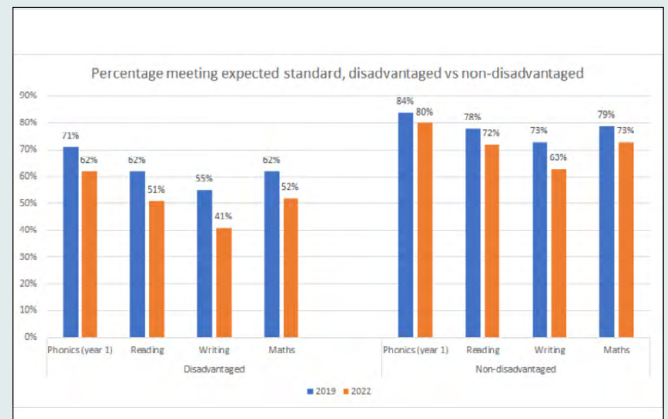
In SATs, there were sharper drops for poorer pupils in reading (11 percentage points), writing (14 percentage points) and maths (10 percentage points) than their better-off peers.

In comparison, performance for non-disadvantaged pupils fell six percentage points in reading, ten in writing and six in maths.

The DfE said the data "shows why it is so important to keep rolling out our ambitious recovery plan across the country".

It is investing nearly £5 billion in catch-up. Schools should "continue to work with parents to make them aware of the additional support on offer", a spokesperson said.

The government's target is for 90 per cent of children leaving primary school to reach the expected standards in reading, writing and maths by 2030.



LOW-ATTAINING PUPILS FARE WORSE

The proportion of pupils meeting expected reading standards at the end of key stage 2 has fallen among those with low prior attainment, but held up among higher-attaining pupils.

Previous data has shown reading results overall improved between 2019 and 2022, whereas it dropped in writing and maths.

New analysis published yesterday suggests the trend masks varied outcomes for different pupils.

Among pupils who met the phonics standard in year 1 in 2017, 85 per cent went on to meet expected standards in the key stage 2 reading test. This was the same proportion as in 2019, despite Covid disruption.

But among pupils who only met phonics standards a year later in year 2, the proportion meeting expected reading standards in year 6 SATs dropped six percentage points to 56 per cent.

Among those who did not meet phonics standards at all, the figure dropped five percentage points to 18 per cent.

In writing, the proportion meeting expected standards in year 6 dropped for all pupils compared to pre-pandemic – but by a more significant margin for those with lower prior attainment.



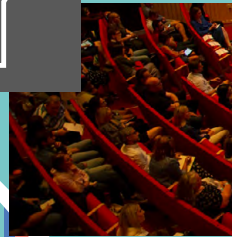
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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

‘Autonomy is respected in other professions but teaching has a ‘done-to’ model’

Vijita Patel has led Swiss Cottage School, a local authority special needs school in Camden, through multiple ‘outstanding’ Ofsted outcomes and even entertained visitors from the World Bank. She tells Jess Staufenberg about empowering staff around a research-focused model

Anyone who takes an interest in special needs education will have heard of Swiss Cottage School. One of the last institutions constructed under New Labour’s ‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme, the £24 million building in north London is an

impressive complex of modernist architecture, taking around 240 pupils from early years through to sixth form. It is also one of only eight schools in the country graded Ofsted ‘outstanding’ six times in a row. Perhaps even more unusual is that this school

– which receives international visitors each year, hosts national events and until recently was a teaching school – is not an academy. Sat in Camden, a borough with almost no academies, Swiss Cottage School has arguably become one of the best-known names among local authority

Profile: Vijita Patel

schools.

The leader of the school since 2016 is Vijita Patel, who first came as vice principal in 2012. Two of the top Ofsted ratings have been under Patel and her team. They are due another inspection very soon and, as we chat, a member of staff actually knocks on the office window and mouths “No phone call”.

Of course, as Patel points out, Ofsted judgments are only “moments in time”. She explains that if there is one reason the school has kept Ofsted’s top grade since 2007, it is because staff continually analyse what they do, never staying still.

“We don’t just continue to do what was working in that last Ofsted that got ‘outstanding’ and apply it again,” says Patel. “We don’t coast. It means our provision is a different version of itself each year... A big part of that is our reflective enquiry and research.”

The school’s full name is Swiss Cottage School Research and Development Centre. It was a teaching school from 2012 until 2020, and research was a required element of the teaching school initiative (until it was scrapped and replaced with scaled-back ‘teaching school hubs’). It means the buildings came with a dedicated research area on the fourth floor for hosting events and workshops with academics, experts and staff.

Patel herself comes from a family with an academic background, and a strong interest in science and technology. Her parents are from a small town in Gujarat in west India, and her mum “shattered constructs” for women by studying economics at college. Her father, meanwhile, landed a top scholarship to study aerospace engineering in the United States during the years of the space race. They relocated first to Illinois, where Patel was born, and then to Florida, where her dad had a job near the NASA Kennedy Space Center.

Here there was a small but thriving South Asian community – but the family had to contend with judgment too. “My father came just as the civil rights movement was settling,” explains Patel. “They were trying to work out where he would go in the university, because segregation laws were being undone.”

Patel and her two younger sisters soon learned crucial lessons around the importance of inclusion. Patel’s parents taught their daughters: “Don’t judge their judgment of you. There’s something that’s leading them to that.” Instead,



UCL researchers are working with the school to redesign wheelchairs

says Patel, her parents urged her to ask: “What are the values and virtues that are going to anchor us?” She credits this with her interest in special needs education, enabling those learners who others might make a “rough judgment” about.

After high school, Patel studied a four-year bachelor teacher training degree at the University of Central Florida, including an entire year dedicated to neuroscience. It is a far cry from a one-year PGCE, or being placed straight



An education minister from Qatar meets the school’s pupils



respected. Our teachers have such a done-to model,” she says firmly in her calm, Floridian lilt. “If we could get away from that narrative, and let teachers embrace their passions and expertise...”

Patel’s aim is for “staff to pose the questions they are answering. It’s not something top down. If there are 30 teachers, there are 30 sets of

“We’ve kept the teaching school work going but without funding”

on to a school-centred teaching training course, as with many of today’s trainees.

“That year I did really deepened the science of learning about pedagogy,” nods Patel. The shorter training period in England means a learning culture in every school is even more important, she continues. “It’s about helping them clarify their education philosophy because that’s coming through the school, not a longer training period.”

Here we come to one of Patel’s driving forces – developing the autonomy of her staff. She doesn’t seem interested in laying down a school-wide philosophy that everyone must sign up to.

“In many other professions, autonomy is so

curious ideas about what they could do in their classrooms.”

Inspectors noticed the approach in 2017: “You listen to the views and research ideas of staff, and empower them to investigate and try out new ideas.”

Developing the educational philosophies of staff is behind the huge number of research projects and international visits that go on.

The school is working with an engineering robotics lab at UCL, with researchers who are “moving the design of wheelchairs to the next phase”, according to Patel. The researchers are particularly accounting for the equipment some

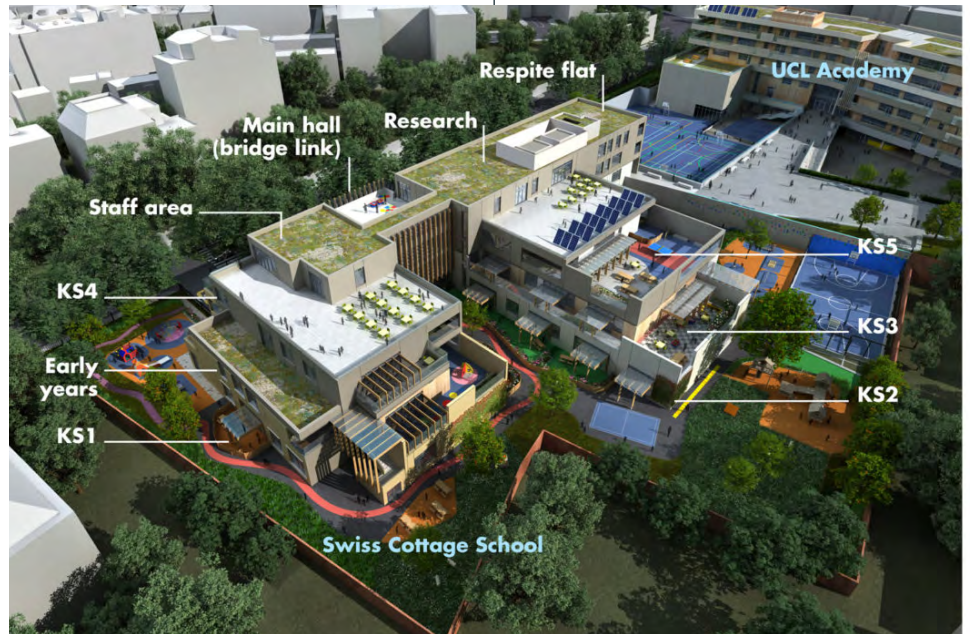
Profile: Vijita Patel



Patel speaking at a House of Commons event on system improvement in September 2021



With her younger sisters Amrita and Sareeka



students require, which could have a huge impact on pupils' "independence and sense of self and dignity", she explains.

Teachers have worked with Barry Carpenter, a SEND expert and now professor of mental health in education at Oxford Brookes University, on developing a book club for pupils who might be unable to read text. This included pilots in "accessible text that's graphic heavy", and now staff involved have rolled the innovative book club model out in their classrooms.

The list goes on: the school feeds back on the 'Evidence for Learning' assessment model, which enables teachers to capture learning moments in the classroom for curriculum tracking, and to send to parents whose children might be unable to explain what they did at school that week. The school has contributed towards the pedagogical ideas behind the model, says Patel.

Similarly, the school feeds into Peter Hyman's 'Rethinking Assessment' group, which is developing a learner portfolio-style assessment model. Patel is hopeful these broader assessment proposals will suit both children with and without additional needs better than the current exams model.

Additionally, the school is working with the Centre for Educational Neuroscience at UCL

"All our reserves are getting eaten up"

and Birkbeck to "take the outcomes of research, which can be quite academic, and find out how that will go into the frontline in schools," says Patel.

All this draws visitors from far and wide: the Middle East, north Africa, United Arab Emirates, Singapore and across Europe. Jaime Saavedra, head of education at the World Bank, has visited, driven by his organisation's research, which shows that of 58 million children not in primary education globally, one third have a disability.

"We hear of them grappling with a reality we just don't have," says Patel of some of her visitors. At the same time, their concerns are similar to hers. "They have the same questions on inclusion and how to get pupils into employment."

Patel, like others, clearly regrets the loss of designation as a teaching school and the £40,000 a year that supported the work. The school is now a partner to the closest hub, a mainstream United Learning academy in west London.

"It was a best practice model I emphasise quite a lot to those international delegations, as much as it's not there now." She adds: "We've kept it going but without the funding"

It's particularly tough given insufficient



Patel with her family during her childhood in Florida

government income. "All our reserves are getting eaten up," says Patel.

The sense of instability is also worsened by the constant churn in ministers. The sector has had nine education secretaries in 10 years. "I wonder what their induction process is?" Patel muses. "In school, we would do that so carefully even if there's a change of a teacher."

So, ministers should be in no doubt that, despite its world-beating reputation, top schools such as this one need proper consistency and funding more than they need to hang onto Ofsted's top grade.

"Are they going to show a commitment to staying in the role?" Patel asks of those now in post.

Event Review

THE SIMONS SKETCH



“Brilliant!” Gullis warms the fringe of an icy Tory conference

Author: Jonathan Simons , Partner and head of the education practice, Public First

“I need to be a little careful,” confided Jonathan Gullis before a fringe. “I got told off by the secretary of state last night.”

Awkward pause. “Oh... dear...” said the chair.

“Don’t worry,” he grinned back happily. “A lot of people tell me off all the time!”

Honestly, it’s hard not to respond to his enthusiasm. Seeing him around the conference over the three days (“I did 11 fringes! Michael Gove did nine and I did 11! Mention that to people!”), he grew to remind me of Colin Creevey from Harry Potter, the young boy who was just overly excited to be at the school and at everything that happened. Or for older readers, the “Brilliant!” kid from The Fast Show. What government was doing on pay was brilliant! Teachers were brilliant! Government had a childcare plan and that was brilliant, but actually whoops he couldn’t talk about it because it wasn’t his brief and actually it might well be a secret, please don’t tell anyone or the secretary of state will tell him off again.

And the boundless capering enthusiasm of the new schools minister made a neat contrast from the internecine warfare of his cabinet elders and betters. To summarise, in case you got lost: Suella dislikes Michael. Kemi dislikes Suella. Nadine dislikes Suella too. Penny dislikes Liz. Priti dislikes Liz. In fact, everyone seems to dislike Liz apart from Kwasi. Kwasi just dislikes anyone who shorted the pound, except if they gave him champagne at a private party while doing it.

Meanwhile, playing the role of



icy elder sister to offset Gullis’ japery, Andrea Jenkyns (pictured) seemed to be mistaking her new list of ministerial responsibilities as a checklist of sectors to offend. Local devolved authorities, who shouldn’t be given skills funding. Tick. Universities, who shouldn’t have international students. Tick. Universities,

the sector called afterwards for comment.

In my now dangerously extended metaphor, he’s clearly cast himself as Serious Dad. Just look at that photo of him and his team on stage. You can almost hear his internal monologue: “Right, remember what we discussed. Happy faces, happy smiles. Just pack it in for a bit and

“ Andrea Jenkyns seemed to have a checklist of sectors to offend

who feed their students “a diet of critical race theory, anti-British history and social Marxism”. Tick.

Forgive me a brief digression: that last sentence is in fact a direct and verbatim quote. I feel the need to clarify because I don’t want people thinking that a light-hearted piece is just making up wildly implausible things for a minister of the crown to say. But then she said it to the Bruges Group, a group whose entire purpose seems satirical, so who can really tell?

The new education secretary, wisely, stayed away from the fringe. In his brief appearance on the main stage, facing an audience whipped into such a frenzy by the previous speaker, Thérèse Coffey, that cameras spotted not one but three people fast asleep, he promised constant attention and pressure on the school system, which went down well with the crowd and about as well as you’d expect with people in

we’ll get McDonalds on the way home.”

And dotted around the rest of the education fringes we were blessed with some gallows humour. David Johnston MP reminded us that he used to run a social mobility charity and wondered out loud if he could go back to doing that as it was a lot more fun than being an MP. Lord Vaizey outlined his priorities if he were to be education secretary for a day and then observed that this was about the average tenure at the moment.

And then it was Tuesday night. With the train strikes forecast to cause chaos on the Wednesday, the hordes departed and that was about it.

Sorry, what’s that? Were there any actual policy announcements from this whole new team, you ask? Yeah, hundreds. There’s a long-term plan. All going very well. Keeping focused on the difficult decisions, except when they U-turn.

Nothing has changed. Keep on going, teachers. All good.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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JOHN BLAKE

Director for fair access and participation, Office for Students

Equality of opportunity requires a united education sector

New school-university partnerships could reshape the sector's capacity and boost equality of opportunity, explains John Blake

Before joining the Office for Students (OfS) at the beginning of the year, my career had been in teaching and latterly education policy. In taking up the role of director for fair access and participation with the higher education regulator, I always knew that partnerships with schools would be a significant part of the work I wanted to do, because so many of the challenges to equality of opportunity in higher education have their beginnings much earlier.

To take the most glaring issue, every teacher knows that learning gaps between young people from different socio-economic groups open before they have even made it into a formal teaching environment. Sadly, despite schools' huge efforts over the past 20 years, those attainment gaps continue. The Education Policy Institute recently concluded that the gap for persistently disadvantaged pupils has been consistently wider than the headline gap for all disadvantaged pupils over the past decade, and that signs of those gaps narrowing before the pandemic have faded.

That is not to say that teachers

have not made a huge difference in that time; that our school system has not seen a substantial widening of these gaps through the many troubles and tribulations of the past years is a worthwhile achievement, even if we want to do more. And the rich debates that teachers are engaged in about curriculum, pedagogy, behaviour and

assessment make it clear that their appetite to close those gaps remains strong, using the most effective methods we can find.

So when I announced last week that universities and colleges would be expected to work with schools to meet some of these challenges, and increase equality of opportunity for all students, I was absolutely not suggesting schools don't know their own business and need to be told it by vice chancellors. However, working across phases in a respectful, open-minded way can yield real benefits for all involved, opening up new ways of understanding, problem solving, and adding capacity and resource where there might be little to spare if acting alone.

But the days of universities rocking up with a pre-determined



menu of one-shot activities schools are told to take or leave are over. I have been clear that universities and colleges should build strategic, enduring and mutually beneficial partnerships with schools.

We know from recent work we have done with higher education

and evaluating the effectiveness of longer-term interventions over multiple years.

We also expect that subject-specific knowledge enhancement for teachers is something academic departments could help with. Other examples we know are happening now include: tutoring delivered by undergraduate students; universities setting up schools and multi-academy trusts; and the development of freely available, high-quality, web-based mathematics support.

My request to teachers and school leaders is to respond positively if they're approached by a higher education provider. And if the approach doesn't seem aimed at building strategic, enduring and mutually beneficial partnerships, remind them that is the goal the OfS has set out.

Building a united education sector, with space to discuss and act on common goals and challenges, can make a huge difference to pupils' outcomes. In reforming our regulatory expectations of higher education providers, the OfS is asking universities and colleges to play their part. I hope schools leaders and teachers will feel confident and valued enough to play theirs too.

“The days of rocking up with a take-or-leave offer are over

providers that there is richness in the offer they can make to schools. Examples of innovative and useful activity can be seen across the country that unfailingly work best where schools feel they are equal partners with their higher education colleagues. The precise nature and work of those partnerships is not for me as the regulator to set. It is something that should emerge through meaningful discussions between those involved, rooted in a deep understanding of the problems all concerned have an interest in tackling.

We anticipate a focus on building knowledge and understanding in younger year groups. Schools, generally, can teach effectively in the statutory assessment years, whereas universities might be able to support with delivering

Opinion

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ADAM ALAGIAH- GLOMSETH

CEO, TalentED Education

NTP: Better, faster data evaluation is now urgent



An absence of positive and compelling evidence is putting the tutoring programme at risk, writes Adam Alagiah-Glomseth

Pumping more than £1 billion into catch-up tutoring was arguably the government's boldest education policy intervention in years. Yet there is a real risk that without more and better evidence of impact, any lasting legacy from the programme will be lost.

Despite myriad setbacks, the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) has resulted in hundreds of thousands of pupils receiving high-quality additional academic support. This must be applauded. But with the programme now in its third year, evaluation of year one (2020/21) is still not published, and there is no plan for subsequent years. Schools and providers need these evaluation insights if we are to reach the scale and impact that is so desperately needed.

Last week, along with other charity and tutoring leaders, I wrote to Kit Malthouse urging him to take action to ensure the impact and legacy of the NTP is secured. One of our recommendations was to better evaluate the programme and share these insights.

Advocates for the NTP (myself

included) point to the solid evidence on the impact of tutoring, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. This is indeed the case. Still, much of the research comes from the US, and is based more on reading interventions and primary pupils than other subjects and age groups. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) itself

acknowledges that there is still some "uncertainty" on the extent of the impact of small group tuition.

The NTP represents a huge opportunity to deepen our understanding of tutoring. It is the largest ever roll-out of tuition in this country, with millions of sessions delivered up and down the country. Despite this, evaluation and evidence generation seem to have been side-lined. Robust large-scale evaluation would give us a better understanding of how to deliver effective tuition and a clearer picture of the impact tutoring has on pupils. This would have two significant benefits.

First, greater insight into what works best would help schools, tutors, and tutoring organisations have a larger impact on pupils.

Important decisions on the right model of tuition, tutor attributes, focus topics, and which pupils to select could be better evidence-informed. We might get more bang – greater pupil progress – from the government's buck.

Second, evidence of the impact of tutoring, from recent UK

specific strategies related to school and pupil engagement. Others, including the Centre for Education and Youth, ImpactED, and my own charity, TalentED Education, are also making modest contributions.

But the larger evaluation of the first year of the NTP is long overdue and might be too little too late. School leaders are making decisions on tutoring now. Next year, the DfE subsidy drops down to 25 per cent, meaning this is the last year schools can try tutoring without big budget implications.

This comes as the reputation of, and demand for, NTP tuition has been damaged by last year's mismanagement. So, the absence of more positive and compelling evidence of impact means many schools might decide tutoring is too risky or too resource-intensive.

The EEF's year one evaluation can't come soon enough, and the DfE must also commission proper follow-up evaluations of subsequent years. Practical insights on best practice must be extracted and resources must be put behind communicating the findings to the sector.

If we are to reverse the narrative on the NTP and realise its potential for transformative and long-lasting change, we urgently need to see progress on evaluating its impact.

“Evidence generation seems to have been side-lined

experience, would go a long way to persuading the teaching profession of its potential benefits for their pupils. The NTP was envisaged as a temporary measure, a short-term response to lost learning during the pandemic. Yet there was also a bigger vision for the NTP's legacy – by winning the hearts and minds of the profession to tutoring, it would become embedded in our schools, subsidised or not. Any hope of realising this legacy relies on robust evidence; teachers tend to like to see the workings.

Sadly, as we enter the third year of the programme, we have not seen enough focus on evidence. We are in danger of squandering this perfect opportunity to learn. Yes, the EEF has published a series of "nimble" studies to assess

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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With the SEND review in the balance, Marios Solomonides explains why his trust is taking matters into its own hands in developing a SEND strategy

Our trust is a family of 12 schools spanning early years to key stage 5, and including a PMLD unit and a unit for children with severe and persistent literacy difficulties. One of the challenges we face is we welcome pupils living across three local authorities, each with its own procedures. So, we greatly welcome the uniformity promised by the SEND green paper, particularly regarding funding and EHCPs. However, the recent change in government and the likelihood of a general election mean we don't know when or if the already drawn-out review will bear fruit.

We've decided our vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, can't afford to wait. In fact, we decided that a while back, and we've spent the past year developing a new trust-wide SEND strategy.

Nadhim Zahawi said the green paper reforms would foster an "inclusive education system", but we want our students to thrive, not merely survive. So, we have shifted from a language of inclusion (making adaptations for some) to one of belonging (ensuring everyone feels valued to begin with).

Belonging begins with the curriculum. Instead of planning and then adapting lessons, teachers will plan lessons with pupils with SEND in mind from the outset. Our schools are working on improving teaching with a focus on building in scaffolding and gradually removing it. This benefits everyone, not least teachers, because adaptations are not needed when accessibility is built in, not bolted on.

Belonging continues through to pedagogy. Research shows ability



MARIOS SOLOMONIDES

Director of SEND, BMAT Education

SEND: Why we're going beyond inclusion to belonging

grouping lacks impact for most, so our default is moving towards mixed-attainment classes. But we are not going back to the old model

help, the teacher should plan a different task with the right learning objective for them. By aiming high and expecting the majority to

“ Adaptations are not needed when accessibility is built in

of differentiation that was the norm when I started my career. I learned to differentiate by task by default, effectively telling pupils I expected a little from a few, more from some and a lot more from others. This way of working not only increases teacher workload, it plays havoc with pupils' self-esteem. If someone is working so far below age-related expectations that no amount of scaffolding will

achieve, teachers have time to do this.

Belonging applies to the whole community. Some parents have voiced uncertainty about the changes we are making, so a key part of our strategy is to work in partnership with them. We are creating parent, pupil and staff forums to take in everyone's views with the aim of improving



relationships, communication, provision, and instilling that imperative sense that everyone's views are valued and valuable.

And belonging means sharing responsibility, not competing for resources. The green paper and the *Opportunity for All* white paper state the government's intention for all schools to be part of a trust. The key benefit of this is the ability to maximise the impact of our abundance of staff with knowledge across SEND. We will formalise this expertise by creating consultants to provide training and advice within our family of schools and beyond, filling a gap in local authority provision. Because children deserve the best, irrespective of which school they attend.

Perhaps the biggest change for us is asking teachers to take ownership for SEND provision for one to three pupils they know well. A maths leader leads maths, but doesn't teach every pupil. Neither does a SENCO. It doesn't make sense to hold either responsible for all the pupils with SEND who come across their desks. For us, the graduated approach was working adequately. But adequate is not good enough – especially if it relies on a SENCO trying desperately to carry out 15 reviews in a day.

If the teacher leading a pupil's provision is someone who knows them well, then quality should be exemplary. More than that, it should make everyone a better teacher and demystify SEND, which many have come to fear.

So, we keenly await the green paper's streamlined processes that will ease the burden on our family of schools. But in the meantime, we are already helping ourselves by going beyond inclusion.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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DR JANE RIGBYE

Chief executive, YGAM

Supporting schools to tackle and prevent gambling harms

A new framework is designed to help teachers and leaders approach the growing concern of gambling harms with confidence, writes Jane Rigbye

Teachers are coming to us more and more seeking support to talk about gambling. That's a good thing. It's in part due to gambling being included in the new PSHE curriculum introduced last year. But there are other reasons too.

In 2019, the Gambling Commission estimated that as many as 350,000 11-to-16-year-olds were spending their own money on gambling each week, that 55,000 young people in that bracket were experiencing social or emotional difficulties due to their gambling, and that a further 87,000 were 'at risk' of doing so.

Britain is home to one of the largest online gambling markets in the world and is one of the only jurisdictions where some forms of gambling can be legally participated in by those under the age of 18. So while most regulated gambling products such as the National Lottery, online gambling and sports betting are restricted to over 18s, it would be naïve to think young people are unfamiliar with gambling prior to entering legal adulthood. Therefore, it is more important than ever that we work together to safeguard our future generations

from potential gambling harms.

Gambling disorder has been recognised by the World Health Organization as an addictive behaviour, and online gambling marketing is listed alongside marketing of fast food and sugar-sweetened drinks as an unhealthy commodity, which can harm relationships, school achievement

“ 55,000 young people are experiencing difficulties

and mental health.

However, gambling disorder is complex and it's sometimes known as the hidden addiction because it can be difficult to spot the signs of harm. Looking out for changes in a young person's behaviour, ensuring they have a strong support network and monitoring their actions can help identify issues sooner.

Common emotional harms include individuals becoming more secretive, stressed, and withdrawn. The impact of gambling on a young person's mental health might result in them struggling to focus or disengaging from normal life. Physical signs of harm include fatigue, headaches, borrowing money and money going missing. These are signs we should all recognise.

We don't hesitate to talk with



children about the risks associated with other behaviours such as consuming alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. Our conversations in schools

worked with GamCare and Fast Forward to produce the Gambling Education Framework – a practical, evidence-based resource launched last week.

The framework's principles have been developed in line with PSHE Association guidance on effective preventative education. It is designed to help teachers deliver high-quality teaching about gambling and manage the difficult conversations that can arise in schools. It will be just as useful for designated safeguarding leads who might have to help pupils who have a gambling problem, or who might be impacted by someone with a gambling disorder at home.

We know education is an invaluable protective measure against gambling harms, just as it is against other dangers young people are exposed to. But teachers must be equipped with the knowledge, resources and confidence to talk about the issue. We hope our framework helps to fill that gap.

For further support and advice around gambling harms, contact the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133 or visit ygam.org

THE REVIEW

HEAD TRAUMA: THE BRUISING DIARY OF A HEADTEACHER

BOOK

TV

FILM

RADIO

EVENT

RESOURCE

Author: Nick Smith**Publisher:** Michael O'Mara**Publication date:** 18 August 2022**ISBN:** 1789293693**Reviewer:** Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell, SENCO and head of assessment centre, Newhaven School

Contrary to the title's implication, this book isn't just the diary of a headteacher. It is the diary of Nick Smith's career, from trainee teacher, to NQT, to head of department, to deputy and, finally, to the top job.

Describing the reality of life in school, Smith communicates the stresses and rewards of each stage with an engaging mix of humour and seriousness. The way in which his family life is weaved into the story and the use of relatable characters makes the book easy to read and difficult to put down. As a result, the lessons taken from *Head Trauma* require little effort from readers; the imagery and characterisation are so familiar that no *Schools Week* reader will struggle to relate them to their own experiences and relationships. Every key point is so richly situated in school and among the staff that the reader is seamlessly transported to the classroom, office or indeed bus queue in question.

Smith's genuine care for the children themselves shines through. His understanding of the impact of their circumstances and prior experiences demonstrates his knowledge of them as individuals and their support needs, but never calls into question his determination to have high expectations of them.

The result is advice that will be valuable to teachers at every stage of their career, as well as other school support staff. His June 2009 entry, for example, provides food for thought for governors and school business managers (especially the holder of the risk register), as well as for any teacher considering volunteering to accompany or lead a school trip and any

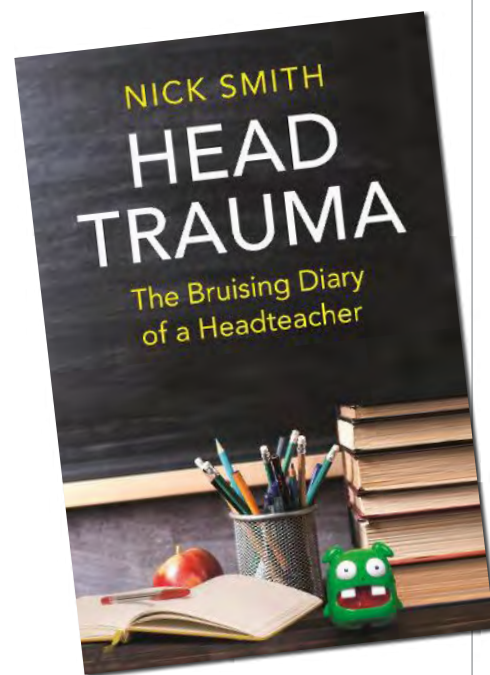
headteacher preparing to sign off on a proposed trip. Checking for mobile phone signal will forever be part of my risk assessments after reading it.

Meanwhile, the genuine appreciation for a long-serving teacher in the July 2016 entry offers a clear synopsis of changes in our roles over the years. Though the 'modest gift token and orchid in a pot' given for 38 years of service is unlikely to incentivise anyone into the profession, the description of Mrs Neal and the heartfelt appreciation for her career-long contribution from her last headteacher just might tempt someone considering a teaching career to give it a go.

As you would expect from a diary, *Head Trauma* is reflective. But the humility with which Smith shares his mistakes and misconceptions is not a given. It genuinely inspires hope and ambition, and that makes this the kind of book to urge non-teachers to read for an honest and accurate account of the joys and stresses of the job. It made me smile and, at times, laugh aloud. There was a sense of shared pride in what it means to teach and to lead – to influence young lives.

Underneath the humour, *Head Trauma* has real backbone in the form of points on which to reflect. These include what kind of a leader the reader seeks to be, how small changes can make a big difference, to how you are perceived in whatever role you fill.

As someone who works with children who have not been able to learn in mainstream schools, I bristled at a small number of phrases to describe those young people who would likely



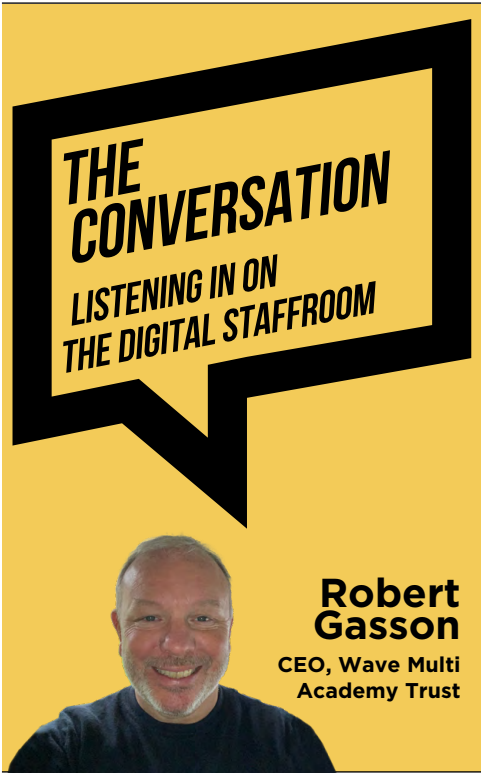
end up in a provision such as mine. The overall warmth of tone about children who don't find school easy reassured me that the choice of words did not reflect negative feelings towards such children. However, meant affectionately as they might be, the book wouldn't have suffered from restraint in this regard.

But, overall, this is a treasure trove of advice presented through a touchingly personal reflection on a career at the chalkface and will be relevant for teachers at all stages of their career.

You might even consider offering it to your partner or family for a realistic account of the job's demands. They might not buy you an orchid in return, but they can only have a better appreciation for the profession's personal toll. That's worth as much as any advice.



Rating



Robert Gasson
CEO, Wave Multi Academy Trust

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

With the now entirely normalised chaos of our national politics, the announcements and promises of conference season have barely registered on my radar. Instead, I've focused on things closer to home, and the new discussion paper from Michael Gove's former special adviser, Sam Freedman, has fit that bill perfectly.

Published by the Campaign for Learning, *Bringing it all Back Home – Reviving and Unifying the Family Learning and Parental Engagement Agendas* puts forward seven recommendations that seem so imminently sensible, you do wonder how far the DfE has strayed from the realities of the system it manages.



Freedman's key recommendation is that the DfE should develop a single 'children and families strategy' that brings together policy on children's social care, SEND, mental health, parental engagement and family learning. It should set out the relative

roles and responsibilities of local authorities, other parts of local government, academy trusts and central government.

Why this hasn't been a central consideration in the past decade or more's systemic reforms – many of which Freedman himself was helping to shape – is anyone's guess. But with the field wide open for more big changes, all parties should join the discussion now.

CHILDCARE FOR TEACHERS

With schools minister, Jonathan Gullis announcing this week that the government is costing the option of providing better childcare support for teachers, there's good reason to look for the devil in the detail.

The government's consultation on earlier proposals to change staff-to-child ratios from 1:4 to 1:5 to reduce costs has been met with fierce opposition from the sector's providers this week, who warn the change could be "catastrophic" for them – and especially for children with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds. A whopping 83 per cent of National Day Nurseries Association members oppose the changes, and nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) say they won't implement it regardless.

Again, it seems so simple as to be obvious that early intervention through high-quality early years education is a valuable investment. Well-resourced, qualified and motivated staff who can work effectively with children in settings with as small a staff:child ratio as possible are vital for preparing children for school, and for identifying and supporting specific needs early. Parents know it and teachers seem the least likely group of people to acquiesce to any less than that.

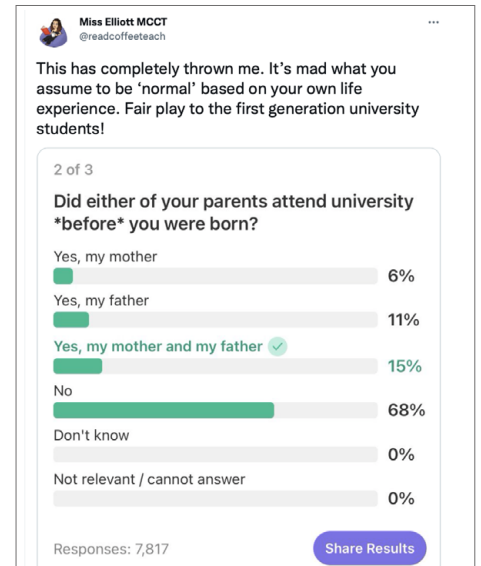
Improved childcare support will no doubt be beneficial to teachers and schools. But maintaining high standards must be as much a ministerial concern for early years education professionals as it is for the rest of us.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CARTER

I had the pleasure of working with Sir David Carter when he was regional schools commissioner for the south west. Sir David is someone I admire greatly and I really enjoyed hearing him open up about his

personal and professional life in the first episode of Phil Denton's new edu-podcast, *Kaizen Education*. From Dave Grohl, through golf to maintaining the standards you expect, there are loads of great take-aways for anyone in education, but particularly for leaders.

Like Sir David and many in our profession, I am the product of a comprehensive school and the first of my family to go to university.



Carter's interview is a great listen, not least because it's a gentle reminder that the comprehensive system has converted ambition to success in the shape of many leaders right across the spectrum of education and business.

BEHAVIOUR IN AP

Lastly this week, a relatively new blog has been making its way up my list of must-reads. Blogs about alternative provision are as rare as hens' teeth, so it's fantastic to have Lee Garner set out to analyse and reflect best practice across the sector.



Having been involved in this area of education for over twenty years, he absolutely nails it from the outset when he says that AP "can only be considered successful if it is capable of enabling children and young people to survive, contribute positively and be productive in society".

And his tips for ensuring good behaviour in AP settings are a fantastic place to start to on the road to that success.

The Knowledge

What we've learned about schools and their communities this week



JL Dutaut picks out a selection of this week's interesting research publications and findings for the evidence-informed professional

Recruitment and retention

A new Best Practice Network survey reveals that school leaders might have reached the end of what they can do to recruit and retain staff without government assistance.

Of 742 respondents, nearly half (49 per cent) cited recruitment as their biggest headache, while retention was the top choice for 29 per cent. Pay comes second to workload reduction in their efforts to recruit and retain the staff they need. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) say they have already made changes to that end, with a further 13 per cent planning to do so. Meanwhile, 71 per cent are already remunerating staff differently from or above national pay scales, and 10 per cent are looking to follow suit.

But the most revealing statistic might be what leaders say they will prioritise over the next two years. While 68 per cent say curriculum support is a priority to recruit and retain staff right now, a further 18 per cent say they will focus more on it. And while 63 per cent try to incentivise staff with enhanced CPD now, a further quarter (24 per cent) say it is set to become a priority. That would see enhanced CPD (87 per cent) and curriculum support (86 per cent) edge out pay (81 per cent) as leaders' primary mechanism to attract and keep staff.

And yet, developing staff came way down the list of their concerns – cited as the most challenging issue by only 15 per cent of respondents. So, either leaders have been overestimating their success with CPD – or more of them are being forced to go into a gunfight armed only with a knife.



What makes CPD work?



But if school leaders are to invest more in staff development as a recruitment and retention strategy, how can they ensure it is effective?

Last Thursday, the National Foundation for Educational Research and Sheffield Institute of Education published their evaluation of the **Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund (TLIF)**. A three-year funding programme (which actually ran from September 2017 to May 2022 due to pandemic disruptions), TLIF aimed to support projects offering high-quality CPD in the areas and schools that needed it most.

The objective was to improve pupil outcomes, making "a significant contribution towards tackling social mobility", but in the end this metric was not explored due to exam cancellations.

The evaluation focused on eight projects delivered by Ambition Institute, EdisonLearning, the Education Development Trust with the Chartered College of Teaching, the Geographical Association with the Association for Science Education, the Institute of Physics, the Teacher Development Trust, Teach First and Tom Bennett Training.

All projects met their recruitment targets and most achieved high levels of participant satisfaction. The NFER identified some features of effective provision.

However, while there was evidence across all projects that "participants had made potentially sustainable changes to their personal practices", the NFER notes that "at

the department and/or school level, there were fewer examples".

The NFER concluded: "Projects had a positive impact on direct project participants' retention in teaching but no observable impact on participating schools as a whole."

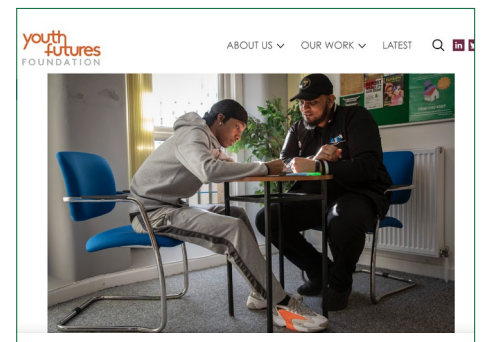
Some leaders may rightly feel aggrieved that £75 million wasn't simply given to the schools that need it most to hang on to their teachers.

Young, gifted and broke

And especially if the aim was social mobility. This week, the Youth Futures Foundation published results of a survey of 2,500 18-to-25-year-olds from ethnic minority backgrounds. It is a sobering read as the cost-of-living takes hold in communities that were already disproportionately affected by Covid.

More than one-third (38 per cent) of the young respondents to the Savanta ComRes poll conducted in August said their mental health has suffered due to financial pressures, nearly matching the 41 per cent who said the same of the pandemic. Meanwhile, 17 per cent said their school grades had suffered, nearly a quarter said they'd struggled to pay for transport to and from their place of work or education (23 per cent), and nearly one in five (17 per cent) said their relationships with family were suffering.

The Youth Futures Foundation hopes the survey will galvanise investment in closing the employment gap. However, it is also a powerful reminder that a **'statistically significant but small'** attainment gap could be easily jeopardised.



Click the subtitles to access all the original research.

Week in

Westminster

Your guide to what's happening in the corridors of power



MONDAY

Season ticket holders for the education select committee will know chair Robert Halfon is not one to mince his words.

And he certainly wasn't holding back when he said of his own party: "Now we're no longer giving bankers an extra £2 billion to short the pound, perhaps we can invest in education".

During his record breaking 11 fringe events at the Conservative Party conference, schools minister Jonathan Gullis managed to give his view on practically everything, including the Labour frontbench.

The opposition has pledged to remove private schools' charitable status, but Gullis said he would "teach" shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson how to "correct her homework" on the matter.

He added that "clearly, she needs a few lessons in education, I won't be taking lectures from someone who's never been a teacher in their life".

So, that's every other minister in his department then?

Gullis also promised to call DfE out for not shouting about one of its own retention policies, before being reminded by Education Policy Institute's Natalie Perera that he now *is* the DfE.

Is he already missing his days as a rowdy backbencher?

TUESDAY

Monthly dedicated schools grant payments, which cover most everyday school costs, were due to be paid to councils on Monday.

Council chiefs finding themselves without the cash to pass onto schools

and pay wages could be forgiven for wondering if austerity had already begun. Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng has promised to bring forward a debt reduction plan and there's been talk of "trimming the fat" at councils.

But luckily the government's update clarified the cash would be paid on Wednesday instead.

Speaking of cash-strapped councils, local government minister Paul Scully has clarified that he "definitely wasn't talking about SEND" when he said there would "undoubtedly" be fat to be trimmed in councils.

Let's cross our fingers and hope for the best then!

No doubt the Oak National Academy is working hard ahead of its procurement of new curriculum resources later this year, but it has come up with an interesting excuse for refusing to name its advisers.

The quango told *Schools Week* that it is currently seeking "initial expert advice", but to avoid "any conflict of interest" they will not be seeking any help from experts at organisations who may be "interested in the procurement".

"We are therefore unable to release any names from this work, because it may signal to the marketplace which organisations do not intend to bid or, conversely, those who do plan to bid because they are not being asked for advice."

So long to Will Bickford Smith, the DfE's former schools policy adviser, who is off to a new job at the University of Exeter (and a board position at Teach First).

The former Conservative activist signed off with a 22-tweet thread on his time at

the Department, including a gushing tribute to former schools minister Nick Gibb.

"You won't find a minister more hardworking and on top of their brief, and he is undoubtedly the most effective minister of any department post-2010," he said.

Pass us the sick bucket!

Another Gibb fan is Jonathan Gullis, who revealed that when he was elected in 2019 he confided in his idol that his dream was to replace him "in about 20 years' time because everyone thought Nick Gibb was timeless".

So will the new schools minister be able to emulate his predecessor's long run in the hot seat? Errr, no. Gullis repeatedly referred to him having just "18 months" in the job – suggesting, like the pollsters, he doesn't hold out much hope for the Tories clinging on to power at the 2024 election.

WEDNESDAY

The DfE snuck out an announcement that its land and buildings collection tool will go live on January 17, not October 4 as planned.

The government has been waiting for six years to try and find out how much academy land it actually owns, so what's another three months delay?

THURSDAY

Love-ins for former schools ministers continued at a Westminster Education Forum event this week, where one civil servant said chair Lord (Jim) Knight, a Labour minister, was remembered with "huge affection" in the department.

You never know, he could make a return before too long...





Ark Alexandra Academy



Executive Principal

Start date: April 2023 or sooner if possible
Salary: Highly competitive with relocation package available if required
Closing date: Monday 31st October, 9am (please notify us if you intend to apply and need more time)

We are looking for an inspiring Executive Principal with passion and rigour to lead Ark Alexandra through its next phase of development. You will be a committed leader with a clear vision and the ability to embed high aspirations and exemplary teaching.

Our school is entering a new stage of growth and we're looking for an Executive Principal to lead the school to further success. You will provide strategic leadership across the school working closely with the Principal on a daily basis. You will have the full support of the Regional Director and the network to ensure that Ark Alexandra makes a lasting contribution to its community.

We are a large secondary school, with 6th form, in Hastings, East Sussex. A popular school, Ark Alexandra is growing from a 10 to 12 form entry, working across a split site, which brings with it unique opportunities for development. At its most recent

Ofsted inspection in September 2021, Leadership & Management, Behaviour & Attitudes, Personal Development and Sixth Form were all judged to be Good. The school works closely with three Ark primary schools, all highly successful both in terms of academic outcomes for pupils as well as creating confident, kind children ready for the next stage of their education.

We welcome applications from experienced Principals who are ambitious, but who wish to remain in a busy school environment, or experienced Executive Principals who gain most satisfaction from engaging with staff, parents and pupils.

For more information and for a confidential conversation, please contact our Head of Talent, Lexy di Marco at Alexia.Dimarco@arkonline.org.



DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

(CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS)
 (L18 - L22)
 Required: January 23

The Derby High School in Bury, is seeking to appoint a Deputy Headteacher for Curriculum and Standards. We are looking for an exceptional leader who is passionately committed to promoting the highest standards of achievement for all.

We are seeking an inspirational leader to build upon our current successes and be a major player in realising our ambition to be an outstanding school. Applicants must be outstanding classroom practitioners with specific expertise in leading on curriculum and assessment and a proven track record of implementing change and school improvement in this area. They will need to demonstrate strategic vision, energy and enthusiasm and a strong determination to make a difference to the lives of the young people we serve.

Please go to the following link on the school website for further details: <http://thederbyhighschool.co.uk/category/vacancies/>



Leeds Mathematics School

Principal

Location: Leeds
Start date: January 2023 (or as soon after)
Leadership Scale point: L36-L42

The GORSE Academies Trust, one of the highest performing academy trusts in the country is opening a unique sixth form, providing a specialised curriculum for students who have a passion and flair for Mathematics. We are seeking to appoint an exceptional senior leader with a proven track record in a secondary or post 16 setting, with the vision to drive the strategic direction and development of this school. Our standards are high and we expect our new Principal to lead our continuing drive for excellence whilst demonstrating passion and integrity. The role offers a unique opportunity to play a key role in the establishment of a new school that will have a high profile both locally and nationally.

For more information or to apply please visit www.tgat.org.uk/jobs/

Closing date: Friday 14 October 2022 at 12.30pm

Governance and Policy Lead

Salary Range: Grade 10, Point 36 - Point 42 (£40,578 - £46,662)

Hours: 37 hours per week, 52 weeks contract with annual leave entitlement (no of days dependant on length of service) This role involves evening and flexible working. We will consider job share roles or term-time requirements

Location: Central Trust Office and all academies

Responsible to: Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Responsible for: Governance Professional

The Directors of Exceed Learning Partnership are looking to appoint an enthusiastic, forward thinking and dynamic individual to join our trust in the new post of Governance and Policy Lead. The successful candidate will be responsible for the Governance Professional and work with the Board of Directors, Local Governing Boards, Executive Leadership Team, Central Team and the academies senior leadership teams to design, implement and support the highest quality governance across the Trust.

The role will ensure that all layers of Exceeds governance arrangements operate as a coherent whole. This strategic position is responsible for ensuring that the Trust and all the academies are compliant with regulatory requirements, whilst consolidating local arrangements that provide robust challenge and support for academies.

The post holder will be the lead in the Trust for ensuring high standards of governance including the smooth and efficient administration of the Directors Board and its Committees, as well as advising the Chair of the board on governance process and practice.

The post holder will oversee compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements, ensure the Board's decisions are acted upon and at all times they are in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and continue to provide public benefit.

At academy level, the post holder will be proactive and creative in identifying where governance is working well but also where interventions may be required. They will build strong relationships with Principals, Chairs and National Leaders of Governance, ensuring governance at each Academy is fully 'Ofsted-ready'. As the Trust's Governance and Policy Lead, the post holder will design and rollout a professional governor-training programme, and lead on governor recruitment and retention, with a licence to be innovative in attracting high calibre volunteer.

The post holder will need to provide leadership as well as operational management; they will be innovative and creative in developing

system-leading governance across the trust, whilst also ensuring statutory and regulatory requirements continue to be met. In addition to this, they will be an expert on the theory and approach to governance with the ability to implement and safeguard high standards of challenge and support;

The ideal candidate will have:

- A record of outstanding and inspirational strategic leadership
- A strong background in Governance and Policy development
- The drive and commitment to improvement

The Governance and Policy Lead will work closely with:

- CEO and Deputy CEO
- Governance Professional
- Trust Central Team
- Academy Principals and Leaders
- Directors and Local Governing Bodies
- Local Authority, Department for Education and other educational partners

The Trust will offer:

- A dynamic, driven and supportive team of colleagues across the Trust
- A comprehensive programme of professional learning opportunities
- A commitment to providing the very best possible opportunities for the pupils and people within our Trust.

Prior to applying:

If you are unclear about any aspect of the application process or you would like any additional information about Exceed Learning Partnership or the role, then please contact:

Mr A Hibbitt: coo@exceedlearningpartnership.com

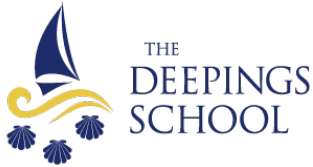
Application is by application form and must be sent: bfso@exceedlearningpartnership.com



Exceed Learning Partnership

• EVERY CHILD • EVERY CHANCE • EVERY DAY •

**Closing Date for Applications:
Wednesday 2nd November (Midday)**



HEADTEACHER

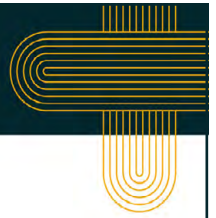
Location: Peterborough
Contract type: Permanent | **Hours:** Full time
Start date: January 2023
Salary: Group 7 (L34 - L40) depending on experience

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking an exceptional individual to lead The Deepings School forward into the next chapter of its exciting journey. It is looking to appoint a Headteacher with a proven track record at either Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher level. As a senior leader in our organisation, the post-holder would be expected to embrace Anthem's values of integrity, collaboration and excellence and work closely with other schools across the Trust, whilst enjoying the autonomy to further develop the school's distinctive ethos.

Discover more about this exciting opportunity at www.anthemtrust.uk/jobs-headteacher-deepings or contact recruitment@anthemtrust.uk

Find out more about The Deepings School at www.deepings.anthemtrust.uk

GORSE



Chief Financial Officer

Director 65, £77,014 - £84,715 (pay award pending)

We are seeking to appoint a Chief Financial officer (CFO) who will have strategic responsibility for all aspects of Trust finance. Delivering operational rigour and high-level direction, the CFO will play an integral role in supporting the growth and development of The GORSE Academies Trust and ensure it continues to be financially sustainable. The CFO will provide insight into commercial decision making and operationally will provide strong financial leadership and guidance.

We believe this is an exciting opportunity for someone who shares our vision and has an excellent track record of relevant senior financial management and strategic leadership experience, with the personal qualities necessary to influence our continuing drive for the highest quality service delivery

For more information and to apply for this role please visit: **Chief Financial Officer (tgat.org.uk)**

Closing date for applications:
Tuesday 11th October 2022 (9am)



Oxford Spires Academy



Principal

Oxford Spires Academy | Location: Oxford
NoR: 1,330 (including 228 in Sixth Form)
Contract type: Permanent | **Hours:** Full time
Start date: January 2023
Salary: Group 7 (L34 - L40) depending on experience

Anthem Schools Trust is seeking an exceptional individual to lead Oxford Spires Academy forward into the next chapter of its exciting journey. It is looking to appoint a Principal with a proven track record at either Principal or Deputy Principal level. As a senior leader in our organisation, the post-holder would be expected to embrace Anthem's values of integrity, collaboration and excellence and work closely with other schools across the Trust, whilst enjoying the autonomy to further develop the school's distinctive ethos.

Discover more about this exciting opportunity at www.anthemtrust.uk/jobs-principal-osa or contact recruitment@anthemtrust.uk

Find out more about Oxford Spires Academy at www.oxfordspiresacademy.org

EDU WEEK JOBS

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